6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Svan

795 torted Christian rites and the obsolete and ruined places of worship. The ruins of the old churches found in the country of the Abkhazians were surprising to European investigators by their beauty and the magnificence of their architecture.

In addition to the ruins of churches, many other remains of Christianity have been preserved by the people, such as the various Christian rites practiced by the Circassians.

778 The religious practices of the Circassians bear a close resemblance to the religious rites and festivals practiced by the Georgian Highlanders. Another point of resemblance between these two groups is their veneration of trees.[17] The places of worship in the Georgian Highlands are usually situated in or near a wood which is the property of the church and regarded as sacred, and from
● [313] which the Svan will permit no one to cut down a single tree. These woods usually surround the ruins of ancient Svan churches.[18] As an illustration, the Russian investigator, I. A. Bartolomei, mentions the sacred forest in the community of Kali in Svanetia. "I saw the enclosure of a small monastery surrounded by a dense forest," writes Mr. Bartolomei.[19] "This was the monastery of St. Quirik, revered as almost the greatest sanctuary in Free Svanetia . . . . Incidentally, it should be noted that the community of Kali complains a great deal for want of a proper forest. In reply to my remark that the place in which we were traveling was covered with ancient trees, the guides told me that this belonged to the church and no one was allowed to cut a single branch from it for fear of God's wrath. If this were done, the people believed that He would send hail of enormous size to punish them."

As Bartolomei says, the want of wood and the scarcity of trees in Kali likewise attracted the attention of D. Z. Bakradze to the superb forests belonging to the monastery of St. Quirik. He, too, writes about this, noting the obedience of the people to religious rules. "These forests," says Bakradze,[20] "consist of pine trees and are kept in sacred esteem by the natives, so that in spite of the

---

[17] Chursin, g.
[18] Teptsov: a, 34.
[19] Bartolomei: 151-3.
[20] Bakradze: a, 51.